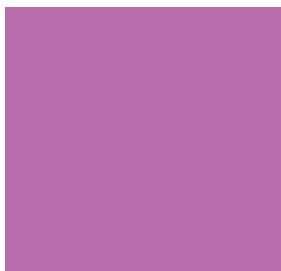
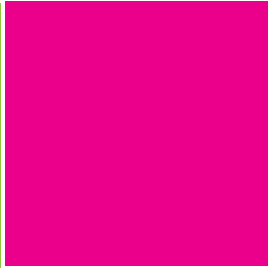


21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



CONSULTATION REPORT

CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Consultation Report and Appendices are also available on the 'Get Involved' page on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website.

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh.

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1. Proposal

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) wishes to seek the views of stakeholders on the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School. The pupils of Rhigos Primary School will instead attend Hirwaun Primary School.

It is proposed that Rhigos Primary School will close with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024.

The proposal is made in accordance with the Welsh Government's (WG's) School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Section 2.1 of the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) refers to elements of school organisation that require the publication of proposals, including:

- The closing of a maintained school.

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the Consultation Document and Impact Assessments that were circulated to all the stakeholders. The link to these documents is below:

[Consultation on a proposal to close Rhigos Primary | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/consultation-on-a-proposal-to-close-rhigos-primary)

2. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This Consultation Report is prepared in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Its purpose is to inform the stakeholders listed below of the outcome of the consultation held between 2nd October 2023 and completed at 17:00 on 17th November 2023.

3. Who Have We Consulted With?

A copy of the Consultation Document, which fully outlined and explained our proposal, was sent to the following stakeholders. The Consultation Document was also published on RCTCBC's website.

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Bodies of:
 - Rhigos Primary School.
 - Hirwaun Primary School.
 - Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn.
- Parents / carers, prospective parents / carers (where possible), and staff members of:

- Rhigos Primary School.
- Hirwaun Primary School.
- Pupils of:
 - Rhigos Primary School.
 - Hirwaun Primary School.
- Neighbouring local authorities.
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan authorities.
- Welsh Ministers.
- Members of the Senedd for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies and regional Members of the Senedd for the area.
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf constituencies.
- Estyn.
- Teaching and staff trade unions.
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.
- Police and Crime Commissioner for the area.
- Childcare providers.
- Mudiad Meithrin.
- Menter Iaith.
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.
- Children and Young People’s Partnership.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- Welsh Language Commissioner.
- Rhigos Community Council.
- Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council.

4. Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified were sent a link to electronic copies of the Consultation Document, and those that requested paper copies received them. The table that follows also outlines the meetings that were convened with the Governing Bodies and Staff Members and School Councils of Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School.

School(s) Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
School Council			
Rhigos Primary School	School Council	Monday 6 th November 2023 at 13:30 to 14:30	Rhigos Primary School
Hirwaun Primary School	School Council	Tuesday 7 th November at 13:30 to 14:30	Hirwaun Primary School
Governing Body and Staff			
Rhigos Primary School.	Governing Body and Staff.	Thursday 26 th October 2023 at 15:30 – 17:00.	Rhigos Primary School.

Hirwaun Primary School.	Primary	Governing Body and Staff.	Thursday 26 th October 2023 at 15:30 – 17:00.	Hirwaun Primary School.
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All Governing Body and staff meetings outlined in the previous table were held face-to-face. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 2 (A to B). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

All School Council meetings outlined in the previous table were held in the corresponding schools. Pupils were given a children and young people’s version of the Consultation Document and Consultation Response Form. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 3 (A B). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

Two drop in sessions were also arranged so that members of the public could discuss the proposal with officers from RCTCBC’s Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services and provide any feedback at the session. The table that follows also outlines the dates and times of the meetings.

Public Drop in Session		
Parents/carers and members of the local community.	Monday 6 th November 2023 at 15:00 to 18:00.	Rhigos Primary School.
	Tuesday 7 th November at 15:00 to 18:00.	Hirwaun Primary School.

At the two drop in sessions all attendees were requested to sign in so that the level of attendance could be recorded. The attendance registers indicate that at the session held in Rhigos Primary School a total of 69 people signed in, however it should be noted that attendance was perceived to be higher than this number as some attendees did not sign in. At the session held in Hirwaun Primary School 3 people attended. Attendees cumulatively included Governing Body members, local Elected Members, local residents, parents / carers, pupils and staff.

Where appropriate, attendees were asked to complete and submit a Consultation Response Form.

5. Summary of Consultation Responses

Responses to the questions raised at the Governing Body and staff meetings and School Council meetings are summarised in the notes of the meetings attached at Appendix 2 (A to B) and Appendix 3 (A B) respectively.

The ‘Save Rhigos Primary School’ action committee, established on behalf of the community of Rhigos, undertook three separate petitions to the proposal. In total, 784 signatures were added to an online petition, this has been classed as one response for the

purpose of this report and 974 and 65 signatures were added to two separate paper petitions, these have been classed as two responses for the purpose of this report.

In addition to this, 236 written responses were received, 89 in writing / or via email and 147 via online survey. Where emails from individuals had been sent to numerous recipients these have been counted as one response.

In total, 239 responses were received. 3 (1.3%) were in favour of the proposal, 226 (94.5%) were against the proposal, 1 (0.4%) was unsure and 9 (3.8%) did not provide an answer. This is outlined in the table that follows.

Summary of Consultation Responses		
Determination	Number	%
In Favour	3	1.3
Against	226	94.5
Unsure	1	0.4
Not Answered	9	3.8
Total	239	100.0

In compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), a summary of the written responses received during the consultation period are detailed in the table that follows along with clarification (where required).

For completeness it should be noted that there were a number of responses received that made statements and comments in relation to political issues, staff conduct, and wider Council issues that are unrelated to the specific requirements of a school organisation consultation, and as such these comments have not been included within the summary below. For those respondents that wish to raise any further concerns on such matters then there is the opportunity to do so outside of this consultation process, more information on how to make your views known can be found on RCTCBC's website.

To confirm, all of the comments and issues submitted during the course of this consultation have been made available and reviewed by RCTCBC's Cabinet Members.

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
Additional Learning Needs (ALN)	What support will there be for the pupils with ALN?	<p>All pupils with ALN will continue to be supported. The Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act provides detailed guidance on the duties and responsibilities of local authorities (LAs) in meeting the ALN of children and young people. Children and young people have ALN if they have a learning difficulty which calls for an additional learning provision to be made for them.</p> <p>The ALN Code for Wales (2021) recommends that Early Years and school settings adopt a graduated response to meeting ALN. A graduated response means that progressively greater expertise and</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
		<p>support can be brought in to address the difficulties a child or young person may be experiencing. Additional or different provision should be made depending on the severity of the child/young person's level of need.</p> <p>This duty and responsibility in this regard will be met regardless of which school a child attends.</p>
	The pupils of Rhigos Primary School will get lost in a school the size of Hirwaun Primary School.	<p>As detailed above, there is a duty and responsibility placed on local authorities for all pupils to receive the support they need regardless of the size of the school.</p> <p>Creating larger schools can build capacity within staffing structures and enable opportunities for developing more specialist wellbeing and/or family liaison posts which will clearly benefit more vulnerable children and families.</p>
Admissions	My child will not be attending Hirwaun Primary.	Choosing a school is parent / carer choice. Applications will be dealt with in accordance with the School Admissions Code.
	What if I don't want my child to attend Hirwaun Primary School?	
	Reports of issues with registering for a place at Rhigos Primary School for September 2024.	<p>During the school application period between September 1st to November 10th, RCTCBC received on-line applications for pre-nursery, nursery and reception places for Rhigos Primary School for the September 2024 academic year.</p> <p>To note there was a period of time during the admissions period that all parents across RCT were unable to apply online due to essential works being undertaken on the system from October 2nd to October 3rd. This message was posted on RCTCBC's web site.</p> <p>The admissions team have confirmed that they did receive a phone call from a Rhigos parent requesting a hard copy of the admissions form, however it transpired that the parent had already successfully applied for a place online. The parent was informed of this at the time.</p>
	Is fulltime nursery provision available in Hirwaun Primary School.	Hirwaun Primary School currently offer full time nursery provision.

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme	Clarification	
Extra-curricular activities	How will pupils' access after school clubs?	<p>The provision of after school clubs are the responsibility of the individual schools and whilst these provisions are considered to be important, it should be noted that post school activities are not a statutory requirement.</p> <p>As is the case across RCT, there will be no home to school transport provision available purely to access these activities, transport will be provided at the start and end of the normal school day only.</p>
	The consultation document states the proposal will provide more opportunities for extracurricular activities but given the transport issues this will be reduced.	<p>This is in reference to the multiple accessible spaces available in Hirwaun Primary School, internally and externally, that can be utilised for such purposes. The fully accessible facilities at Hirwaun Primary School by their very nature do provide more opportunities.</p> <p>The transport provision is as stated above.</p>
	There are lots of extracurricular activities already on offer in Rhigos.	<p>This is not disputed; the Consultation Document states that the view of RCTCBC is that Rhigos Primary School is a good school. It is noted within the Community Impact Assessment that after school clubs run at both schools.</p>
	Will the range of after school clubs still be available at Hirwaun?	<p>This was confirmed in the Community Impact Assessment where it states, '<i>There are after school clubs being run at both Rhigos and Hirwaun Primary School, and clubs currently running at Rhigos Primary School can continue at Hirwaun</i>'.</p>
Breakfast Club	<p>How will pupils access breakfast club?</p> <p>The provision of breakfast club is the responsibility of the individual schools and whilst this provision is considered to be important, it should be noted that pre-school activities are not a statutory requirement. Therefore, there will be no home to school transport provision available purely to access this provision, transport will be provided at the start and end of the normal school day, as is currently the case for all schools across RCTCBC.</p> <p>However, if any child travelling on the school bus wishes to have a breakfast once they get to school then arrangements will be put in place to ensure that they receive one.</p> <p>The breakfast club operating in Hirwaun Primary School is very popular with an average of 53 pupils receiving a breakfast every day. The average daily number for pupils accessing a breakfast in Rhigos is 13 so there will be plenty of space available for any</p>	

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>pupils wishing to have a breakfast to do so. These figures have been calculated as a daily average of the attendance of the first half term of the 2023/24 academic year.</p>
	<p>Rhigos was voted Best Breakfast Club in Wales 2022.</p> <p>RCTCBC are aware of this impressive achievement and rightly the school community are very proud. A statement of congratulations was provided by the Director of Education and Inclusion Services at the time the award was received. Catering Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf have responsibility for delivering breakfast clubs in partnership with schools.</p>
Building Condition	<p>Why was the property condition survey used four years old?</p> <p>Property condition surveys are carried out cyclically on a five yearly basis which aligns with an industry standard timescale, so the survey used is still valid.</p> <p>The WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) states that:</p> <p><i>'Information about the quality of accommodation at all existing schools likely to be affected by the proposals including reference to the Local Authority's most recent (property) condition survey using the categories of the original 21st Century Schools Survey'.</i></p> <p>This information has been included in compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). The 2019 property condition survey was the most recent undertaken and so this was used accordingly.</p> <p>To note, a copy of the condition survey was shared with those who requested it during the consultation period.</p>
	<p>How much work has been undertaken at Rhigos Primary School since the property condition survey was undertaken?</p> <p>Lots of work has been undertaken at Rhigos Primary School since the property condition survey was undertaken in 2019. Works include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacement windows and doors. • New fencing and gates. • New drainage and resurfacing. • Repairs to roof areas. • Mechanical and electrical upgrades.
	<p>How much money has been spent at Rhigos Primary School since 2019?</p> <p>Including the cyclical maintenance checks over £180,000 has been spent at Rhigos Primary School. This can be broken down as follows:</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works funded through the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for repairs and maintenance – £94,084. • Works funded directly by RCTCBC – £79,736. • Works funded by the school's delegated budget – £7,876.
Why hasn't the work identified within the property condition survey been undertaken?	<p>Some work of the work identified in the property condition survey has been undertaken, as listed above. Works are undertaken proactively and reactively across all 116 school sites, and as such have to be prioritised within the budgets available.</p> <p>In addition, lots of work has also been undertaken that was not identified in the property condition survey, including health and safety and safeguarding works.</p> <p>The property condition survey identifies the condition of a building at a point in time and is used as a tool for RCTCBC to manage its estate. In total, RCTCBC has 115 schools across 116 sites to manage, regular visits are undertaken by RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team and issues are flagged up on a priority basis and undertaken when required. Rhigos Primary School has been in regular contact with, and has been visited regularly by, the RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team.</p>
Why hasn't the RCTCBC looked after its buildings?	<p>RCTCBC has an obligation to ensure that its buildings are safe, watertight and warm, and that's what it has done. As stated above there have been regular visits to Rhigos Primary School by RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team and its contractors, and it also undertakes cyclical maintenance checks and surveys of its mechanical and electrical equipment.</p> <p>All schools in RCTCBC buy into a building maintenance SLA and work is undertaken and managed through this SLA. On many occasions RCTCBC has paid for works at Rhigos Primary School that have been the responsibility of Rhigos Primary School's Governing Body, due to the school not having the required budget for the works to be undertaken.</p>
Why is one of the buildings at Rhigos Primary School deemed 'end of its life / beyond economical repair'?	<p>The term 'beyond economical repair' is a classification given to an asset where that asset requires repairs likely to be more expensive than its replacement value. It does not mean that the building is unsafe.</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>What does this mean?</p>
	<p>Why was permission denied for a member of the Action Group to undertake their own survey?</p> <p>RCTCBC has 116 school sites to manage and as such it is important that there is consistency in the way surveys are undertaken so that it can appropriately manage its education estate and prioritise works. A third party looking at one particular school would not be comparable with our in-house procedures given the subjectivity of the survey process.</p> <p>The survey undertaken in 2019 was free from prejudice.</p>
	<p>How does Rhigos Primary School not comply with the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>In terms of the physical site and the school buildings at Rhigos Primary School these are largely inaccessible, however, there is scope for improvement. Looking just at the protected characteristic 'disability', the school site is largely non complaint. Given the topography and the age of the buildings there will inevitably be some areas of the school and site that are inaccessible for those with mobility difficulties or for wheelchair users. In addition, there is no hygiene room available at the school.</p> <p>Building Bulletin 99 (BB99): Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects, is what all local authorities in Wales use as a guide to build new schools. BB99 states the following: <i>In the context of classroom layouts 'fully inclusive' means that which enables a pupil using a wheelchair to access all areas of the room, and therefore, all activities easily, without any disruption to classroom layouts.</i></p>
Community Impact	<p>The Community Impact Assessment is lacking in information.</p> <p>To confirm, what has been included within the Community Impact Assessment is in line with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).</p> <p>However, as advised in the published Community Impact Assessment, this document has been revisited and updated following a review of the comments received throughout the duration of the consultation process. The updated version of the Community Impact Assessment will be available on RCTCBC's website once the Consultation Report is formally published.</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
<p>What will happen to the Rhigos Primary School site? It's mentioned in the Consultation Document that it could be used for the community.</p>	<p>Considerations and options of any potential future use of the Rhigos Primary School site will be consulted upon separately.</p> <p>Should the proposal go ahead, colleagues in RCTCBC's Community Development Team will work with the local community of Rhigos to identify any viable and sustainable options for a community use. RCTCBC's Community Development Team will also be able to support any potential community groups to identify and apply for any funding that may be available to secure to develop any provision.</p>
<p>The children will lose their cultural identity if the school closes; their 'Cynefin'.</p>	<p>There will be many opportunities for all pupils to learn about their local area and cultural identity as they navigate the curriculum for Wales and develop their enquiry based learning.</p> <p>Hirwaun is only approximately 2 miles from the village of Rhigos, and so the expectation is that this will not be lost for any pupils.</p>
<p>Will the parent and toddler group currently running at Rhigos be moved to Hirwaun?</p>	<p>RCTCBC are aware that there is a parent and toddler group running at Rhigos Primary School for a day a week. There is a dedicated community room available at Hirwaun Primary School so should the group leader want to establish a parent and toddler group at Hirwaun then this can easily be accommodated.</p>
<p>Educational Outcomes</p> <p>Pupils from Rhigos Primary School will not have the same educational experience at Hirwaun Primary School.</p> <p>Both schools should be reinspected by Estyn prior to a decision being reached.</p>	<p>In compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) the response to the proposal from Estyn has been provided in full at Appendix One.</p> <p>Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011 / 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. However, Estyn are a statutory consultee in such matters and as such have provided their opinion on the overall merits of the school organisation proposals.</p> <p>Estyn have considered the educational aspects of the proposal and their conclusion is that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in this area.</p>
<p>Why close a 'good' school to one that required 'Significant Improvement'.</p>	<p>The consultation document acknowledges that Rhigos Primary School is a good school. That is not disputed.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
		<p>Hirwaun Primary School's inspection was undertaken in 2018 and the following year, in 2019, a follow up visit was undertaken by Estyn which judged that sufficient progress had been made in relation to the recommendations.</p> <p>As a result, Estyn removed Hirwaun Primary School from the list of schools requiring 'Significant Improvement' with no further visits required. An inspection provides a snapshot of the school at that moment in time, Hirwaun Primary School would not have been removed from the category should any of Estyn's concerns remained.</p> <p>It is important to note that school performance and improvement is not static and this does fluctuate over time. At the time of writing, both schools are accessing core support from Central South Consortium school improvement services. Neither school is deemed to be in need of enhanced support due to presenting issues.</p>
	Ability to successfully deliver the Curriculum for Wales (CfW).	<p>The Consultation Document acknowledges that the teachers at Rhigos are providing pupils with a great education, however it also sets out the challenges in delivering the (CfW) in a small and aging school.</p> <p>At no point does it state within the Document that staff at Rhigos Primary School are not delivering upon their obligations in terms of delivering the CfW, the Consultation Document highlights the difficulties of doing so within the defined parameters at the school in relation to its size and age, and the ongoing challenge this will create in view of the projected falling numbers at the school. The possibilities for more distributed models of leadership are inevitably more restricted in smaller schools due to the smaller size of the workforce.</p>
	Teacher/parent interactions will be lessened, and relationships will be diminished as a result of the pupils being transported to school on a bus.	<p>There are already children from the community of Penderyn who travel to Hirwaun Primary School on home to school transport and so the school has well established systems in place to ensure that parents and carers are kept fully informed of any issues that have arisen during the school day, and should the proposal go ahead this communication will continue in order to support both the new pupils joining the school and their families.</p>
Pupil Numbers and Capacity	How are the pupil projections calculated?	In terms of pupil projections, RCTCBC collects birth data from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board covering the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf Ely

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>areas. This provides the births and postcode for each child. There is also an allowance for new housing developments and existing pupils on roll allowing for predictions to be accurate.</p> <p>In relation to the pupils already in school the cohort survival method is utilised, where the number of pupils in each year group is assumed to be the number in the preceding year group during the previous academic year multiplied by a constant.</p>
Why was Hirwaun Primary School built with so much capacity?	<p>RCTCBC's current Local Development Plan (LDP), adopted in 2011, has a significant housing allocation identified as part of a strategic site within the current Hirwaun Primary School catchment area. In addition, at the time the new school in Hirwaun was being developed there was tourism and commercial opportunities being designed as well as the plans for the dualling of the A465. Given the attention that was and still is focussed upon this specific area on a regional scale, it would have been remiss of us not to include additional capacity at that juncture.</p> <p>RCTCBC's Revised LDP is currently being prepared and so we do not know what, if any, new housing allocations will be included within the new LDP for this area, however, should the same housing allocation be identified within the new LDP then the surplus capacity at Hirwaun Primary School will be sufficient to cater for the number of pupils the development will generate.</p> <p>Comments made in relation to the size of Hirwaun School being anything other than to plan for the pupil places required for the potential new development are refuted.</p>
There is surplus capacity in a lot of schools across RCT, why is just Rhigos affected.	<p>There is a statutory duty placed on Councils to effectively manage its school places. All school places, capacities, admissions and projections are kept under constant scrutiny. RCTCBC has implemented reorganisation proposals affecting over 40 schools over the last 10 years and all schools will continue to be reviewed.</p> <p>Information on the capacity of all schools affected by proposals must be included within all school organisation documents in compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Without the inclusion of this information the consultation would not be valid.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
		<p>This proposal has been prepared for consultation for a number of reasons, the rationale for closure is not purely based on one thing alone. The capacity of the school is included for information, amongst many other data sets, as it provides stakeholders with a wider picture of the proposal presented.</p>
Rural School Categorisation	<p>Why isn't Rhigos Primary School classed as a rural school?</p>	<p>The WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) contains a list of rural schools for the procedural presumption against the closure of rural schools. As such, it is specified within the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) that The National Statistics Urban Rural classification has been used as the basis of the designation of rural schools for this purpose.</p> <p>The rural schools listed were identified as being located within villages in the sparsest context, other (hamlet or dispersed) in sparsest context and other (hamlet or dispersed) in less sparse context. There are no schools in RCT on the list of rural schools as there are no schools that meet the above classifications for this singular purpose.</p> <p>For clarification, on the Office of National Statistics website, Rhigos itself does have a rural classification, as in fact does Hirwaun, but neither meet the specified criteria to be included on the list as defined above.</p>
	<p>The Council was in receipt of a Small and Rural School Grant from the Welsh Government that was allocated to Rhigos Primary, this demonstrates that the Council acknowledges its rural status.</p>	<p>This is correct. Rhigos Primary School was one of the schools in receipt of funding awarded via this grant. Since 17/18 there have been 13 schools across RCT that have been a recipient of this grant.</p>
Transport and Travel	<p>The home to school transport costs have not been made available.</p>	<p>There will inevitably be a cost for home to school transport and this has been acknowledged in the Consultation Document and listed as a disadvantage in the assessment of the proposal.</p> <p>Should the proposal go ahead, any new home to school transport contract will be competitively tendered. As the number of pupils attending Hirwaun Primary School will factor into the size of the transport</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>required and consequently have an impact upon the service costs, this financial information remains unavailable.</p>
<p>There will be no active travel opportunities for those pupils who currently walk to school.</p>	<p>RCTCBC acknowledges that pupils living in Rhigos will need to travel to Hirwaun Primary School either by bus or by car. This information is included within the Community Impact Assessment and is not in dispute, however what is also included within the Assessment is how this will be partly mitigated by the opportunities the new school will provide given the many outdoor facilities at Hirwaun Primary School.</p> <p>The Community Impact Assessment states <i>‘Those pupils that will be travelling by bus or car under the new arrangements will still have the opportunity to experience the outdoors and gain plenty of fresh air given the plentiful opportunities on the Hirwaun Primary School site. External canopies, the outdoor classroom, the spacious yard, the MUGA, the sports field, gardens etc all present multiple opportunities to support and nurture health and well-being for pupils and staff’.</i></p>
<p>Hirwaun Primary School is further away than Rhigos Primary School so the carbon footprint will be increased.</p>	<p>Given the distance between Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School, all pupils residing in the current Rhigos Primary School catchment area will qualify for home to school transport, therefore negating the need for numerous car journeys to the school.</p> <p>If the proposal were to go ahead, RCTCBC will close an energy inefficient building with pupils moving to an existing energy efficient building, so implementing this proposal will have an overall positive impact upon the carbon footprint.</p>
<p>If there is an emergency, how will my child get home if I don't have a car?</p>	<p>There are already children from the community of Penderyn who travel to Hirwaun Primary School via home to school transport and so Hirwaun Primary School has well established systems in place to ensure that parents / carers are kept fully informed of any issues that have arisen during the school day. Should the proposal go ahead this communication will continue in order to support both the new pupils joining the school and their families.</p> <p>Hirwaun Primary School, as do all schools, have a duty of care to look after the care and wellbeing for all pupils. If any issues or emergencies arise during the school day, as is currently the case, the staff at Hirwaun Primary School will ensure that they do all</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>they can to support any families that cannot attend Hirwaun Primary School.</p>
<p>The traffic outside Hirwaun Primary School is already busy.</p>	<p>Hirwaun Primary School has been built with a dedicated staff and visitor car park, as well as an onsite bus drop off facility. As part of the planning obligations for the project, an off-site school drop off / community car park was constructed. This additional parking has significantly reduced the congestion outside Hirwaun Primary School at the start and end of the school day. To note Rhigos Primary School has neither a dedicated staff nor community car park within the vicinity.</p> <p>Since this work has been undertaken, neither RCTCBC or the Hirwaun Primary School have received any recent complaints in relation to parking and traffic congestion.</p> <p>Given that all pupils currently residing in the Rhigos Primary School catchment will qualify for home to school transport, there is an expectation that the impact upon the traffic, as a result of the proposal, is minimal.</p>
<p>I'm not happy for my child to travel unaccompanied on a school bus.</p>	<p>RCTCBC's Integrated Transport Unit successfully transports thousands of children a day to schools throughout RCT from the ages of 3 to 19. Understandably there can be a great deal of anxiety for all parents when their child travels on a school bus for the first time, this can also be the case for pupils travelling for the first time, however there is strict criteria in place that transport providers must adhere to in order to ensure the safety and safeguarding of the pupils, which is of paramount importance to us.</p>
<p>The cost and frequency of public transport from Rhigos to Hirwaun is prohibitive for regular use.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, the cost and operation of the public transport in the area is not within the remit of RCTCBC to manage.</p> <p>As all pupils living in Rhigos will have the opportunity to utilise the home to school transport provision we anticipate that the number of journeys required on public transport to be minimal.</p>
<p>Should the pupils numbers attending Hirwaun be lower than expected, would the home to school transport</p>	<p>No, in compliance with distance criteria contained within Welsh Government's Learner Travel Measure, this transport provision would remain in place regardless of the numbers of pupils transported.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
	provision cancelled?	be
Impact on Pupils	Transition arrangements.	<p>If the proposal were to go ahead, there will be targeted support for all pupils from Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School. Meaningful and positive transition is an integral part of ensuring that pupils settle into their new school setting with little disruption to their well-being and education. This is supported by providing effective pastoral and academic support and structured opportunities for learners to become familiar with the new school environment and staff.</p> <p>Advice and support will be provided by RCTCBC to both schools involved to ensure that the transition process is as smooth and seamless as possible.</p>
	Pupil well-being has not been considered.	<p>The well-being of all pupils has been considered and is paramount. The transition arrangements that will be delivered, as noted above, ensure there will be lots of opportunities to help the pupils navigate the change and happily settle into their new school as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Further information is included within the Equality Impact Assessment, in addition RCTCBC considers that the proposal benefits the children and young people in accordance with the seven core aims set out within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>
	The children from Rhigos will feel like outsiders as they attend a school outside of their community.	<p>Hirwaun Primary School already welcomes children from other communities, the catchment area was extended to include pupils from Penderyn in 2021 and there are also a number of pupils that attend from outside the current catchment area. The new pupils from Penderyn were welcomed into the Hirwaun Primary School family and they have successfully settled into their new school. To provide reassurance we can confirm that they are not treated any differently which I'm sure will also be the case for any pupil from Rhigos wishing to attend Hirwaun.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
Impact on Staff	What support is available for staff?	<p>RCTCBC has well established Human Resource (HR) policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.</p> <p>HR Council officers have already visited all staff in Rhigos Primary School, and all are aware of the processes that may follow and the operational and personal support that is on offer.</p>
Legitimacy of the Consultation Process	The consultation period was too short.	The WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) sets out the parameters for the consultation. It states that consultees must be given at least 42 days to respond to the document. For this consultation, consultees were given 47 days which exceeds the statutory obligation placed upon us in this regard.
	The information presented in the documentation is biased in favour of Hirwaun Primary.	<p>The purpose of the Consultation Document is to present a proposal, and the fact that this is just a proposal at this point in time is clearly referenced throughout all documentation made available during this period. To confirm, all information presented has been done in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).</p> <p>Some responses specifically question the choice of the images used in the documentation. To clarify, the same data for both schools has been included in the 'Where we are now' section of the Consultation Document, with external images of both schools included. Further information and images on Hirwaun Primary School were included within the 'Where we'd like to be' section as this sets out the perceived benefits of moving pupils from Rhigos to Hirwaun. There is no bias intended, merely the logical and coherent setting out of the proposal.</p> <p>RCTCBC refutes this comment.</p>
	The data presented within the documentation is out of date.	<p>The data presented within the report is in compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).</p> <p>All data sets provided were the most up to date at the time of writing. Those included are in accordance with the information prescribed within the Code. To clarify, in terms of the pupil numbers reported, there is a distinction made between statutory aged pupils and non-statutory aged pupils.</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>The Estyn information included in the report is taken from the most recent inspections undertaken in Hirwaun and Rhigos Primary Schools respectively in 2018 and 2019. This is in accordance with the Code where it states consultation document must contain 'information from the most recent Estyn reports for each school.'</p> <p>The Condition Survey information included in the report is taken from the most recent survey undertaken in 2019. This is in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) where it states that 'information about the quality of accommodation at all existing schools likely to be affected by the proposals including reference to RCTCBC's most recent condition survey'.</p>

In accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 and in compliance with RCTCBC's statutory obligations, the consultation included the following questions:

1. Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?
2. Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?
3. How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

The table that follows provides a summary of the responses received from those respondents that answered the questions. As a result of the responses received, the Welsh Language Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal will be updated accordingly.

Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015: Summary of Consultation Responses						
Questions	Responses					
	No		Yes		Not Sure	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language?	43	29.3	24	16.3	80	54.4
Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?	No		Yes		Not Sure	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
	42	26.6	20	13.6	85	57.8
How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be	Positive Effects Increased		Negative Effects Decreased		Not Sure	

increased, or negative effects be decreased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Medium Schools – The only way it will increase the positive effects of the Welsh language is to send children to a Welsh medium school. • Teach More Welsh – Teaching more Welsh in schools will increase the positive effects of the Welsh language. • Transferring to Welsh Medium Schools – The proposal may result in additional children transferring to the neighbouring Welsh medium primary, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller Classes – Teachers in a larger class will have more responsibility and less time to focus on every pupil, therefore the Welsh language be negatively affected. 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1260 192 1407 224">Number</th> <th data-bbox="1420 192 1513 224">%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1260 232 1407 264">140</td> <td data-bbox="1420 232 1513 264">95.2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Number	%	140	95.2
Number	%						
140	95.2						

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, RCTCBC has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the proposal, the consultation also included the following question:

1. How would the proposal affect you because of your:

- Sex.
- Age.
- Ethnicity.
- Disability.
- Sexuality.
- Religion/Belief.
- Gender Identity.
- Relationship Status.
- Pregnancy.
- Preferred Language.

Of those respondents that answered this question, the majority, 136 (92.5%), gave no answer to this question. However, 4 (2.7%) commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their age whilst 7 (4.8%) commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their disability. As a result of responses received, the Equality Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal will be updated accordingly.

6. Response from Estyn

In compliance with the WG’s School Organisation Code, statutory document 011 / 2018 the response to the proposal from Estyn has been provided in full at Appendix 1. Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the WG’s School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) and the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn considered that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in this area. The response states that the ‘local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines strongly the many advantages of closing Rhigos Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary school’.

In accordance with the WG’s School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), the areas of the response from Estyn that require clarification are documented in the table that follows.

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
The proposal has also considered the impact of the proposal on the quality and standards in education including separate sections on outcomes, provision, leadership, and management. While the sections on outcomes and provision appear to be fair and reasonable, the section on leadership and management is too generic and doesn’t focus specifically enough on the implications of the proposal on leaders in both schools. The proposal identifies that transferring pupils from Rhigos Primary School to the newly built Hirwaun Primary School would provide extensive outdoor space, including green space, for pupils to learn and play. It assumes fairly that pupil wellbeing and attitudes to learning would benefit from a diverse and engaging outdoor space. It further notes that a fit-for-purpose school building would help create a better learning	There will be staffing implications for those staff employed at Rhigos Primary School. For example, there will be certain roles that are currently replicated in Hirwaun Primary School’s staffing structure. Staff will be concerned about the security of their jobs which is why these concerns will be addressed as soon as possible during the statutory consultation process, consulting with staff and utilising RCTCBC’s ‘Managing Change Policy’ to explore options for staff affected.

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
environment. The proposer identifies that if the proposal comes about it is likely to have a positive impact on the delivery of the curriculum at the school.	

7. Assessment of Consultation

There were a lot of highly emotive and passionate responses received during the consultation period which is important to note. Correspondence was received from staff, pupils, parents/carers, past pupils, members of the communities and from those elected locally and regionally. Rhigos Primary School is clearly a much loved school, and should a decision be made to close; it is recognised that there would be a feeling of loss by the community. This is acknowledged within this report, as it is within the Community Impact Assessment.

In accordance with WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), a further assessment of the proposal has been undertaken. This involved a review of the same matters assessed in formulating the proposal, in conjunction with giving due consideration to the responses and comments received during the consultation period. The proposal was reassessed against:

- the likely impact on quality and standards in education,
- the likely impact on the community, and
- the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

After further consideration of the proposal, and consciously considering the responses received to the proposal, the conclusion reached is that the proposal remains to be the most appropriate and as such no amendments to the proposal have been made.

8. Conclusion

No information that has been presented during the consultation is deemed to necessitate a change to the Consultation Document, as such the information contained within it remains unchanged. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal should be wholly implemented with no amendments.

The recommendation of this report is that a Statutory Notice be published, to reflect the proposal as consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress the implementation of this proposal.